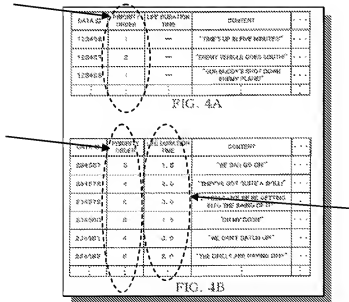


REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Nakayama (US Patent Publication No. 2003/0139209). Claim 1 was deleted for sake of compactness in prosecution, and not for purposes of patentability. Accordingly, claims 2, 3 and 5-8 are now pending.

The Present Invention

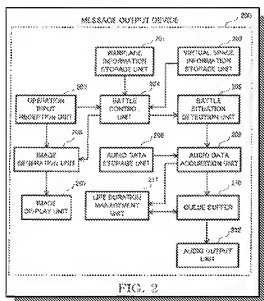
The embodiments of the present invention disclose two types of messages that may be output to a user during a game. As illustrated in Figs. 4A and B, two types of messages are termed "main" messages and "sub" messages p.14, l.4. As can be seen, in these figures, each message may have an associated "priority order":



In various embodiments, the "priority order" is used to prioritize the output of the messages with respect to each other. In the illustrated embodiment, the messages in the main messages and in the sub messages may have different priority orders.

In one embodiment, the specification discloses a queue buffer 210 that receives audio messages and priority orders of the messages. Queue buffer 210 then outputs the audio messages according to the priority order. More specifically, the specification states:

The queue buffer 210 is a queue area to which, for example, priority orders can be set, and temporarily retains audio data which is transmitted together with a priority order from the audio data acquisition unit 209. Then, the queue buffer 210 supplies the retained audio data to the audio output unit 212. At this time, if the queue buffer 210 retains a plurality of audio data, it supplies the audio data to the audio output unit 212 in the order of high priority (in the order of arrival for equal values). p.15, l.10-15. Emphasis added.



To the contrary, in a case where it is determined that audio output can be performed, the audio output unit 212 reads out audio data from the queue buffer 210 and outputs audios based on the audio data (step S306). That is, the audio output unit 212 reads out audio data based on the priority order from the queue buffer 210, synthesizes an audio signal from the read-out audio data, and outputs the audios from the predetermined speaker. P.17, l.25-29. Emphasis added.

In addition to the above, the embodiments of the present invention also disclose a duration that may be associated with messages. As can be seen in Fig. 4B, above, in this embodiment, the sub messages have an associated "life duration time." As explained in the

specification, the life duration time is used to indicate whether pending audio messages in the queue buffer 210 should be deleted and not output. More specifically, the specification states:

The life duration times in the drawings are values designating the time for which the audio data can be retained in the queue buffer 210. Specifically, if audio data having a life duration time set is kept in the queue buffer 210 without being output and the life duration time has passed, the audio data is deleted (cleared from the queue) by the life duration management unit 211 described later. That is, when the life duration time passes, the audio data is deleted from the queue buffer 210 and does not remain as an object of audio output. P.14, l.5-10. Emphasis added.

Claim 2, as amended, is directed towards message priorities. More specifically, claim 2, now includes the following limitation:

wherein a priority order is set for each main message and each sub message; and said message output unit outputs the acquired main message and sub message in an order based on the priority orders.

Claim 6, as amended, is directed towards message duration. More specifically, claim 6, now includes the following limitation:

wherein a life duration time is set for each main message and each sub message, and a message deletion.

Nakayama

Nakayama appears to disclose a horse racing game which provides two types of running commentaries. One type is a "normal" commentary mode, where commentary is provided in a predetermined method (i.e. centered on the lead horse); and the other type is a "specific" commentary mode where the commentary is centered upon a specific horse. Abstract.

Fig. 6 illustrates commentary used for the normal commentary mode:

Fig. 6

COMMENTARY VOICE DATA TABLE FOR NORMAL COMMENTARY MODE

COMMENTARY VOICE CODE	COMMENTARY VOICE DATA CONTENTS
00001	STARTED: ALL HORSES GOT GOOD START
00002	STARTED: ON HORSE No. X FAREWELL IS BEHIND
+	+
+	+
01004	NOW, SID GOSSETT IS COMING. IT'S EASY POINT-O-MIN
+	+
00246	HORSE No. Y IS ALREADY LEADING!
+	+
+	+
00418	ONLY 200m LEFT, HORSE No. X IS STILL LEADING!
+	+
+	+
04057	HORSE No. X IS LEADING, BUT HORSE No. Y IS COMING OUTSIDE!
+	+
+	+
00679	HORSE No. X WORKS, MANY COME NEXT CLOSELY TO EACH OTHER
+	+

As can be seen above, each commentary is identified by a "commentary voice code," but lacks any data regarding a priority order. More specifically, with respect to Fig. 6, the specification states:

As shown, a plurality of the commentary voice data are prepared in correspondence with the commentary voice codes. The commentary voice codes are associated with elements indicating the race progressing state such as the elapsed time after the race starts or a position of the leading horse in the race (for example, a running distance after the start) in the normal commentary mode. [0068].

In the case two commentaries are to be played at the same time, Nakayama is silent as to how to prioritize one over the other. Nakayama merely states that only one is played:

For example, if the commentary voice codes are associated with the elapsed time after the start, the output timings of the respective commentary voice data are preset, and the commentary voice data are reproduced according to the passage of time. When a plurality of commentary voice data are prepared for the same elapsed time, one of them is selectively reproduced. [0068].

With respect to Fig. 7, in the case of specific commentary mode, Nakayama merely states that the status of the target horse and the specific horse is reported to the user. More specifically, it states:

[0070] In the specific horse commentary mode, first the positional relationship between the target horse and the specific horse is determined in each point of time after the mode is switched. This is carried out by calculating a position coordinate of the target horse and the position coordinate of the specific horse. [0070] Emphasis added.

Fig. 7 illustrates some of the positional relationship commentary used for the specific commentary mode:

Fig. 7 COMMENTARY VOICE DATA TABLE FOR SPECIFIC HORSE COMMENTARY MODE		
STATE OF SPECIFIC HORSE	COMMENTARY VOICE CODE	COMMENTARY VOICE DATA CONTENTS
INSIDE OF TARGET HORSE (State A)	AM01 AM02	INSIDE, INSIDE ! LET ME SEE HERE ! INSIDE, INSIDE ! LET ME SEE INNERMOST AREA !
OUTSIDE OF TARGET HORSE (State B)	BM01 BM02	OUTER, OUTER ! LET ME SEE OUTER AREA ! OUTER, OUTER ! COMING FROM OUTSIDE !
PRECEDING TARGET HORSE (State C)	CM01 CM02	FORWARD, FORWARD ! THE HORSE IS IN FORWARD ! FORWARD, FORWARD ! SEE BEHIND FORWARD AREA !
BEHIND TARGET HORSE (State D)	DM01 DM02	BACK, BACK ! SEE BACKWARD ! BACK, BACK ! COMING FROM BEHIND !
WITHIN VISUAL FIELD OF CAMERA (State E)	EM01 EM02 EM03	THIS IS IT ! LET'S SEE THIS HORSE ! THIS IS IT ! IT'S THE DAY FOR THIS HORSE ! OK, OK, HE IS RUNNING FAST TODAY !

As can be seen above, each commentary is again identified by a "commentary voice code," but lacks any data regarding a priority order.

With regards to paragraph [0065] in Nakayama, this paragraph merely discloses the centering position of the race image on horses in the race. In normal mode, the race image is centered upon the leader, and in specific horse mode, the race image is centered upon the user's horse.

Nakayama Distinguished

Claim 2, as amended, is not disclosed by Nakayama. More specifically, Nakayama fails to disclose the limitation of:

wherein a priority order is set for each main message and each sub message; and said message output unit outputs the acquired main message and sub message in an order based on the priority orders.

As discussed above, Nakayama does not disclose anything at all about prioritizing one message over another message. Accordingly, Nakayama does not disclose anything about a priority order being set for each message.

The Examiner assertion that Figs. 6 and 7 disclose such a limitation is traversed. As pointed-out above, Figs. 6 and 7 illustrate a commentary voice code that the computer uses to identify a commentary, and Fig. 7 illustrates a state of a specific horse associated with commentary. Those figures do not disclose a priority order, as illustrated by the specification of the present invention.

For at least the above reasons, claim 2, as amended is asserted to be allowable over Nakayama.

In light of the above, dependent claims 3 and 5 are also asserted to be allowable over Nakayama for the same reasons as claim 2, and more specifically, for the specific limitations they recite.

Claim 6, as amended, is not disclosed by Nakayama. More specifically, Nakayama fails to disclose the limitation of:

wherein a life duration time is set for each main message and each sub message, and a message deletion.

As discussed above, Nakayama does not disclose anything at all about messages having a life duration. Further, Nakayama does not disclose anything at all about queued messages not being played due to expiry of the life duration of those messages.

The Examiner assertion that paragraphs [0065] and [0070] disclose such a limitation is traversed. As pointed-out above, paragraph [0065] merely relates to how race image will be displayed to the user. It has no relevance to audio commentary. Further, paragraph [0070] merely describes features of the "specific" commentary mode. More specifically, that the commentary will be based upon how far behind the user's horse is from the lead horse. These paragraphs are completely silent as to a life duration for messages and expiration of messages.

For at least the above reasons, claim 6, as amended is asserted to be allowable over Nakayama.

In light of the above, independent Claims 7 and 8 are also asserted to be allowable over Nakayama for the same reasons as claim 2, and more specifically, for the specific limitations they recite.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, Applicants believe all claims now pending in this Application are in condition for allowance. The issuance of a formal Notice of Allowance at an early date is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes a telephone conference would expedite prosecution of this application, please telephone the undersigned at 650-326-2400.

Respectfully submitted,

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